

ABSTRACT OF THE DISCLOSURE

Electronic mail software includes a main email component and a number of installable components which communicate bidirectionally with the email component through an application programming interface (API). The installable components include authoring/reading components as well as at least one mailbox browser/editor component. The main email component provides an underlying graphical user interface (GUI) for functions directly associated with the storage and transfer of electronic mail messages. In particular, the main email component provides menu items which allow the user to SEND, READ, REPLY, FORWARD, DELETE, SAVE, PRINT, for example. The main email program also handles all data bundling and unbundling that may be required to transform a message created by an authoring component into a fully MIME compliant message. In addition, the main email component includes "hooks" (an application programming interface or API) for the attachment of the installable components. The authoring/reading components each provide functionality which is particular to the type of document the component is designed to create/display. According to the invention, some modular components, or messages created by them, have assigned "roles" whereby senders and recipients of certain email documents are provided different kinds of access to the documents.